

Med aide gets jail term for indecent assault on mom

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Last year, Brenda Closel stayed at a North Philadelphia children's hospital with her toddler son, who had a sleeping problem.

She shared a bed with her then- 20-month-old, who was being observed by a sleep technician.

Yesterday, Closel, 38, told reporters outside the Criminal Justice Center that when she went to Temple University Children's Medical Center Jan. 10, 2007, she asked the technician to observe her, too, since her husband thought she "breathed funny" at night.

But technician Mathew Philip, of Cherry Hill did more than that.

"He took it upon himself to come in and play doctor," Closel said.

When Philip came in to check on her about 4 a.m. Jan. 11, asking to listen to her lungs, "that's when things turned wrong," she said, "with him touching my breast, massaging my nipples, playing with my belly button, pulling my pants down at my hips and [saying he's] listening to my diaphragm area."

She added: "I kind of just felt trapped, helpless. My baby was strapped next to me . . . connected to this machine. So I couldn't just snatch him and run out."

She reported the assault to the hospital.

The *Daily News* generally does not publish the names of victims in sexual-assault-related cases, but Closel agreed to have her name printed. She has also appeared on Fox 29 News, which broke the story last year.

Philip, now 54, pleaded no contest in December to indecently assaulting Closel and two other women and, yesterday, to attacking a fourth woman.

Municipal Judge Marsha Neifield yesterday sentenced him to 11 1/2 to 23 months in jail, followed by six years' probation on four counts of indecent assault.

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The assaults on the women - in their 30s through 50s - occurred in 2006 and 2007 at Temple University Hospital or Temple University Children's Medical Center. Philip has since been fired from Temple.

In court yesterday, Philip, a short man with glasses, who is originally from India, told the judge in a rambling, accented voice: "I heard all the accusations. I am a friendly person. All those years, nobody ever told me I was doing something wrong.

"I am without a job," he said. "I am borrowing money for credit card. . . . We have no income. I have two kids go to school." He said he has \$400,000 in debt.

Defense attorney David Mischak told the judge his client is "very dedicated to his family" and worked hard to finance his children's college educations. He asked for a sentence that would allow Philip to work.

Philip's wife, 21-year-old son, and an uncle sat quietly in the back of the courtroom during the sentencing hearing.

Closel told the judge that because of the assault, she quit her job as a receptionist because she would cry at work.

She also moved from her apartment building, where she had neighbors of Indian descent.

"I kept seeing his face," she said amid tears.

Another victim, who was 57 when Philip indecently touched her while she was participating in a sleep study at Temple in September 2006, told the judge the assault affected her marriage.

Assistant District Attorney Eileen Hurley asked the judge for the 11 1/2-to-23-month county prison sentence because of the seriousness of the offenses.

She contended that Philip's behavior began before these women were assaulted.

Philip was arrested in 1998 in New Jersey on allegations of indecently assaulting two women who were being observed for sleep problems at a private facility.

A grand jury in those cases did not charge him with anything.

He was also arrested here in 2001 in a similar incident involving one woman while he was working at Pennsylvania Hospital. He was later acquitted.

In addition to jail and probation, she ordered that he get treatment and not supervise women in any future job.

He is to report for his jail sentence on April 30.

A Temple University Hospital spokeswoman said afterward that a criminal background check had been conducted on Philip when he was hired, but that it had come up clean. *